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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ANKARA 000802

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TAGS: [MOPS](#) [MARR](#) [PREL](#) [PARM](#) [TU](#) [RS](#) [GG](#) [UP](#) [RO](#) [BU](#)

SUBJECT: TURKS SEEK TO INCREASE MULTILATERAL MARITIME
EFFORTS ON BLACK SEA, BUT REQUEST U.S. STAY OUT

REF: A. BUCHAREST 308

[1](#)B. ANKARA 552

Classified By: DCM Robert S. Deutsch for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

[1](#)1. (C) Turkish military and civilian officials have told us that Turkey is working to multilateralize its current Black Sea Harmony (BSH) operation, which monitors and assesses Black Sea maritime traffic and reports the findings to NATO. This effort would only extend to the other five littoral states. Turkey envisions that within the next 12-18 months, all six littorals will participate in BSH and share information both with each other and with NATO, in essence creating a mini-Operation Active Endeavor (OAE) in the Black Sea. The Turks want to place this operation under the umbrella of BLACKSEAFOR (BSF), and are resistant to efforts (even by fellow littorals like the Romanians) to bring NATO or the U.S. into the Black Sea, citing concerns by Russia. The Turks emphasize that they continue to want to work with us on frozen conflicts and other issues which affect littoral states themselves, but they do not want any real outside maritime presence in the Sea itself. End summary.

[1](#)2. (C) On Feb. 7, NAVATT and PoMilOff called on Chief of the Turkish N5 RADM (UH) Deniz Kutluk and N5's Chief of Strategy and Agreements RADM (LH) Cem Gurdeniz to discuss Black Sea issues. In addition, on Feb. 8 PolMilCouns and PolMilOff called on MFA Deputy DG for Security Affairs Fatih Ceylan, who told us that he had been instructed to carry out consultations with the U.S. on Turkey's latest efforts on Black Sea security.

Turkish Officials: We Share the Same Goal...

[1](#)3. (C) The Navy's Kutluk portrayed the Black Sea as a center of stability for the past 70 years, citing the relative calm that reigned in the Sea throughout World War II and the Cold War, during which Turkey was "an honest broker." All our interlocutors claim that Turkey, the U.S., and NATO all share the same goal for the Black Sea: peace and vigilance against asymmetric threats such as terrorism, WMD and dual-use item smuggling, and TIP. Though Turkey does not discount the risk of these threats, Kutluk said that Turkey's year-old unilateral Black Sea Harmony (BSH) operation--which monitors, hails, and inspects (on a voluntary basis) ships within Turkey's Exclusive Economic Zone waters and reports the results to NATO--has an assessment that these threats are quite limited. According to Gurdeniz, since March 2004 the Turkish Navy has monitored 9000 vessels and physically inspected 300, but have found no items or passengers of concern. MFA's Ceylan added that the Navy has detected some smuggling of illegal migrants but BSH has deterred this activity. He admitted, however, that BSH only extends to Turkey's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) waters, and the GOT believes some of the illicit traffic now bypasses BSH's areas of operation.

[1](#)4. (C) According to Ceylan, the BSF countries agreed in 2004 to compile a joint threat assessment of the Black Sea. Officials reviewed this during their Feb. 3-4 consultations in Istanbul, and will present it to a BSF senior officials meeting in Kiev in March (date not yet set; we understand it has slipped from January, perhaps due to the political situation in Ukraine).

[1](#)5. (C) Gurdeniz reported that within the next 12-18 months, the other five littoral states will join the BSH operation in practice, sharing information not only among themselves but with NATO. Ceylan said fellow NATO Allies Bulgaria and Romania would join first, with the others following as their suspicions recede and their confidence grows. Gurdeniz said there are some "political and administrative" barriers which may prevent the other littorals from stating explicitly that they are joining under the BLACKSEAFOR (BSF) rubric. (NOTE: Since Turkey only operates BSH in its EEZ, we are not sure why Turkey is so sanguine that the Black Sea presents little in the way of asymmetric threats, but if all the littorals indeed begin to carry out a similar cooperative operation the picture should become more accurate, something the Turks claim they are aiming for. END NOTE.)

...But Please Stay Out of the Pool

16. (C) Gurdeniz's account does not exactly jibe with the Romanians' and Bulgarians' understanding that BLACKSEAFOR will not carry out "constabulary functions" that NATO could do (ref a). The Turks have complained to us before that Romania and Bulgaria (especially the former) are overanxious to involve NATO (and by extension the U.S.) in Black Sea maritime security. Both our MFA and Navy interlocutors claim that any effort to involve NATO in Black Sea maritime security will spook the Russians, even something as apparently innocuous as a PFP or PSI maritime exercise or the U.S. observing BSF's relatively modest annual exercises. The Turks have thus explicitly requested us not to seek any U.S. or NATO role in this area, citing their concern that the Russians would then cease cooperation within BSF. Indeed, the Turks say, now that half the littorals are NATO Allies and the multilateral BSH operation will report its results to NATO, NATO is effectively in the Black Sea anyway. Ceylan told us, however, that should the littoral states determine that their combined efforts are not enough to deal with security risks in the Black Sea, Turkey would urge its fellow littorals to approach NATO for assistance.

17. (C) Both Ceylan and Kutluk emphasized that the Turkish request for the U.S. to stay out of the Black Sea only extends to the maritime arena. The Turks want to continue to work with us on issues on land, such as frozen conflicts and economic development, but want us--in Kutluk's words-- to "leave the maritime domain to Turkey." They cite their continuing cooperation with us in areas such as the Caucasus Working Group. (COMMENT: We find this argument somewhat disingenuous; the Turks seem to be saying that asymmetric threats stop at the water's edge. We are not the only ones who doubt Turkish motives. The Georgian DCM recently told PolMilOff that Turkey turns a blind eye to maritime smuggling emanating from Turkey into Abkhazia. We raised this with Ceylan, but he only responded that Georgia (as well as Romania and Bulgaria) has limited maritime capability at present. END COMMENT.)

18. (C) In addition to Turkish concerns--real or imagined--that any U.S. or NATO activity in the Black Sea would anger the Russians and make them cease cooperation, the Turks observe that the Montreaux Convention serves as a brake on non-littoral navies' role in the Black Sea. The Convention limits both the tonnage and duration of stay (21 days) of outside naval forces. Both Ceylan and Kutluk emphasized that Turkey has no interest in altering Montreaux; Kutluk in particular criticized alleged U.S. efforts to pressure Turkey to change the treaty in the past.

Comment: Perhaps They Protest Too Much

19. (C) It should come as no surprise that the Turks insist on having the lead in the Black Sea, and they are jealous of what they perceive as U.S. desires to nose our way in. The positive side of this is that the Turks thus feel pressed to make BSF more effective and meaningful and to ensure BSH fulfills the role the OAE plays in the Mediterranean. BSF's exercises up to now have been limited in scope and are also hampered by interoperability and language problems (the Turks insist that English be BSF's working language, though probably all the other navies could more or less manage in Russian). It is clear that the Turks' fellow Allies on the Black Sea have a more welcoming approach to U.S. or NATO involvement, and the Turks have responded to this pressure by working to multilateralize BSH and share the resulting information with the Alliance.

10. (C) Arguing that they are already doing what needs to be done, Turks are suspicious of our efforts to participate in the Black Sea. A heavy-handed U.S. approach--especially vis-a-vis maritime security--will only increase Turkish resistance. While we should not buy into all the Turks' rhetoric on the Black Sea, we should express appreciation for their taking the lead as they have. We would defer to Embassy Moscow on whether U.S. participation as observers or more actively would inhibit Russian cooperation in BSF or eventually BSH. Regarding Turkey, both military and civilian authorities emphasize that their comments applied only to the maritime arena. When USDP Feith visited Ankara in late January, he told the Turks that Washington was considering expanding the Proliferation Security Initiative from the maritime theater into ground and air operations (ref b). Perhaps one way to break down Turkey's resistance to U.S. activities in the Black Sea would be to encourage the Turks to host a PSI air exercise in 2006 focusing on the Black Sea region. We will explore with Turkish officials receptivity to such an event in the weeks ahead. End comment.

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